# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

### Application #1027SC-1 for Dorchester District Two

## A. Vision (40 total points)

|  | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)** | 10 | 6 |

**(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

The consortium provides a clear vision statement however, it *does not* build upon work that has been done in the four core educational assurance areas. The bullets list out an clear actions they want to take to achieve the vision (i.e. close the achievement gap) but they do not indicate *how* they are going to complete those actions. It does not provide a clear and credible approach to the goals of accelerating student achievement, deepening student learning, and increasing equity.

|  | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)** | 10 | 5 |

**(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The Consortium has chosen to focus on secondary schools but notes work will extend to earlier grades from time to time. No specific data or rationale is provided to make the case for focusing on secondary schools or indicate that a needs analysis has identified middle and high schools as the critical juncture in a student's academic success or failure. Rather, the application notes that the initiative will focus on "what seems to be the common denominator between all students who struggle to graduate on time or progress later on in college -- *poor academic skills and not knowing*." This statement is very vague and provides no actual insight as to the success or failure of students.

The Applicant has chosen to select all secondary schools in Dorchester Two and Berkeley districts. The schools in Berkeley District have significantly more poverty than the reported poverty in Dorchester Two. All three high schools in Dorchester Two have less than 40% poverty; however, because the total number of students from low-income families in the application is greater than 40%, the minimum requirement is met. The applicant states that schools with high poverty and dropout rates have been selected, but there is no dropout data provided to support that assertion. While dropout data is provided in (A)(4) it is not broken out *by school* so that one can analyze the variations between schools.

All participating schools are provided in a comprehensive list as are the numbers of students, and students in specific required groups, as defined.

|  | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)** | 10 | 2 |

**(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

The Applicant does not provide a high-quality plan for scaling up of the work to support change throughout the districts. The application notes that initiative will begin in secondary schools and that the partnership recognizes that work should start in earlier grades (i.e. preschool). The application does not include a theory of action or logic model about how this work will improve student outcomes overall. There is a mention that teachers will use a train-the-trainer model to extend their learning, but there is no discernable theory of how this plan will lead to scalable change.

|  | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)** | 10 | 3 |

**(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant failed to draw a link between their proposed actions and the student goals required for this program. In addition, the application does not identify ways in which the consortium would assess individual students and match their needs to the actions steps identified.

The performance goals outlined do provide for an ambitious yet achievable rate of student achievement growth for most categories. However, there are some goals that do not seem to be achievable based on this plan:

- HSAP and SC PASS -- goals for LEP and "disabled" students jump from 12 to 15 percentage points in the last year of the grant. This is not an achievable approach given the level of growth anticipated in prior years. This pattern repeats itself for other schools, as well.
  - For the end of course exam, there is a jump of nearly 40 percentage points in one year; this is not an achievable goal. The achievement gap data is also impacted by these unreasonable jumps at the end of the grant term.

Rather than listing the achievement gaps as defined, the applicant listed the scores of subgroups which is insufficient to determine performance goals.

Graduation rates for Dorchester Two for LEP students and those who qualify for FRPL show unreasonable growth that is not connected to any specific intervention. Graduation rates for Berkeley are predicted to remain relatively low -- not an ambitious goal for these students.

The college enrollment rates are not broken out by subgroup and maintain the same ratio of college going for graduates for Dorchester Two and a smaller rate of college going among graduates for Berkeley students. This does not meet the standard for an ambitious goal for students.

# B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)** | 15 | 8 |

**(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

The Applicant notes that Consortium districts have not performed as well as hoped and, indeed, much is left to be done. The progress displayed for the change between FY 2010 and FY 2011 is positive in most areas for both districts; however, *there is no data provided* to establish this positive progress for the year into a record of success in the past *four* years, as required. While a number of specific strategies are mentioned, there is no discussion of the districts' approaches to persistently lowest-achieving schools or other low-performing schools.

The application does not include information on the availability of student performance data for students, parents, and educators. This does not meet the requirement for (B)(1)(c).

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)** | 5 | 2 |

**(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The application states that each consortium district includes personnel salaries on the website but it neglects to indicate whether school level data is available. No further details about the information provided addresses the required elements of this item. Applicants are required to make available:

(a) Actual personnel salaries at the school level for all school-level instructional and support staff, based on the U.S. Census Bureau's classification used in the F-33 survey of local government finances (information on the survey can be found at http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/f33agency.asp);

(b) Actual personnel salaries at the school level for instructional staff only;

(c) Actual personnel salaries at the school level for teachers only; and

(d) Actual non-personnel expenditures at the school level (if available).

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)** | 10 | 1 |

**(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

While the two separate LEAs have the autonomy typical to each school district in the State, there is no evidence provided to clarify the level of autonomy. The letter provided from the State Superintendent of Schools indicate a lack of support for the application and puts into question the consortium's likelihood of receiving support for waivers or other state accommodations should they become necessary.

There is no agreement between the parties in the consortium included in the application, so there is no clear understanding of the relationship between the two districts. The agreements with other entities that are described are not relevant to this item.

The information provided is insufficient to ensure successful conditions and sufficient autonomy under State legal, statutory, and regulatory requirements to implement the personalized learning environments described in the applicant's proposal.

| (B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points) | 10 | 2 |
|---|---|---|

**(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant states that stakeholders provided input to the RTT-D application but does not describe how they were engaged in the development of the proposal and / or how it was revised based on their feedback.  No documentation is provided to show that at least 70% of teachers support the application.  While there is a letter of support from one of the inovolved mayors, there is only one other letter from the State Superintendent which points out a number of shortcomings with the proposal.  This set of letters and description of the process does not meet the threshold for meaningful stakeholder support.

| (B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points) | 5 | 2 |
|---|---|---|

**(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:**

There is not a high-quality plan for analysis of the current state presented. The application does not indicate a personalized learning approach.  Using failing scores in EOC exams is sufficient for one indicator but it does not come to the level of a high-qulaity analysis of needs with a clear plan of how students' needs will be assessed and the other elements required of a high-quality plan as defined for this grant.  The work described doesn't sufficiently attempt to address a need in math and science.

# C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

|  | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(C)(1) Learning (20 points)** | 20 | 8 |

**(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

Because this item is so long, this part of the review will be evaluated following the selection criteria outline.

(C)(1)  This application describes a system of opportunities, but does not articulate how it will be personalized for every student to make sure that they have the services they need to be successful in a college- and career-ready educational program. The Individualized Graduation Plan seems to be the closest to a guide for personalized learning but it does not seem to be used to guide the student's learning or the teachers' approach to helping this student be successful.

(a) None of the required items for this section on student engagement are addressed in the application.

(b) The individualized graduation plan is designed to enable the student to achieve his  or her individual learning goals. A sufficient variety of high-quality instructional approaches and environments are included in the application. High quality content, including digital content (i.e Rosetta Stone, Kahn Academy) is available to students.  It is unclear that there is ongoing feedback for students of any quality or vareity.  Accomodations for high-need strategies include  alternative times and settings (AM & PM tutoring, Saturday institute) and alternative instructional strategies (APEX learning).

(c) A 1/2 credit class was included in the application to help students navigate the college prep process and understand the tools and resources provided to help them track their learning.  While this could be appropriate to address the basics, supplemental support for students wtih high needs is lacking and would be necessary to fully meet the needs of students.

| (C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points) | 20 | 7 |
|---|---|---|

**(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

(C)(2)(a) Math and science teachers will participate in specific professional development over the summer to improve instructional techniques. This application does not differentiate for specific teachers who may have different levels of skill in this area.  The classes intended for these teachers will count toward an advanced degree in math or science indicating that they are content-based rather than focused on pedagogy.   While there is discussion of hands-on project-based strategies, there is no direct tie to efforts to engage students specifically in response to their academic needs or interests. There is no mention of either frequent measures of student progress or teacher effectiveness through the evaluation system as required by this grant.

(C)(2)(b) A number of tools are called out in the application (SMART boards, parent portals) as well as supports (technology specialists) that are used in the classroom, but again, no direct link is made between these tools and accelerating student

progress.

(C)(2)(c) School leadership teams are not mentioned as a part of this application other than the involvement of the guidance counselors who would receive additional training and support.

(C)(2)(d) This applicant did not include a plan for increasing the number of students receiving instruction from an effective or highly effective teacher.

## D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

|  | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)** | 15 | 5 |

**(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant provided inadequate information to ensure agreement with any of the criteria for this item, and in fact, did not include any information relevant to most of the criteria listed. The only indication of a change to facilitate ease of compliance with the grant is the memorandum of agreement for the RTT-D competition itself; however, that MOA is not included in the application.

The applicant does provide a list of staff who will be working on the proposal in the next section which provides some insight as to the organization of the district to support the effort.  It is unclear which, if any, of these positions besides the District Liaison is unique to this proposal and which have other duties.

|  | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)** | 10 | 1 |

**(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The application notes that parents have access to an online portal and telephone communication from school earlier in the application, this section is largely ignored. No mention of ensuring access to necessary content, tools and other learning necessities other than the districts' compliance with federal laws regarding homeless youth.  There is no mention of technical support for stakeholder groups, exporting data, or the compatibility of systems.

## E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

|  | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)** | 15 | 7 |

**(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

The application incudes a leadership team responsible for continuous improvement and a schedule of meetings to monitor progress. While this is a start, it is not a rigorous continuous improvement loop.  Sufficient information is not provided to fully understand what will happen at the listed meetings and how these convenings will result in continuous improvement.

|  | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)** | 5 | 2 |

**(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

There are "advisory meetings with key stakeholders" included on the schedule of meetings but there are no actual strategies for communication and engagement as this criteria requires.

|  | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)** | 5 | 1 |

**(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant did not use the required performance measures and did not meet the requirements of this critera. Applicants are required to provide ambitious yet achievable performance measures, overall and by subgroup, with annual targets for required and applicant-proposed performance measures.  While there were some general indicators included, the specific required performance measures for the impacted grade levels were not included nor were annual targets.

For each applicant-proposed measure, the applicant must describe—

(a)  Its rationale for selecting that measure;

(b)  How the measure will provide rigorous, timely, and formative leading information tailored to its proposed plan and theory of action regarding the applicant's implementation success or areas of concern; and

(c)  How it will review and improve the measure over time if it is insufficient to gage implementation progress.

The applicant must have a total of approximately 12 to 14 performance measures.

This application included only six major indicators with no sufficient rationale for choosing each indicator, insufficient description of how the measure will provide rigorous, timely, and formative leading information and insufficient information as to how the applicant will review and improve the measure over time.

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)** | 5 | 2 |

**(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

The information provided does not meet the standard of a clear high-quaity approach to improve the applicant's plan.  While a list of actions to be taken from assessing software and technology tools to completing "a formal evaluation"  is included, there is not sufficient detail to indicate a comprehesive approach to evaluating effectiveness and responding to findings of evaluations.

# F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)** | 10 | 0 |

**(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

The budget table was not included in the submission.  The budget narrative did note a variety of source for potential matching or sustaining funds.  Some of which, McKinney-Vento and Title I, are meant for specific populations and may be inappropriate to use to support RTT-D activities depending on the students served.

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)** | 10 | 2 |

**(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The sustainability plan included a number of potential sources of funds for continuation should the applicant receive the grant. Joint partnerships with institutes of higher education and others are noted as a potential sources of revenue to extend the proposed work of the grant. However, the absence of a budget means there is insufficient evidence on which to judge the needs and reasonableness of sustainability.

# Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)** | 10 | 0 |

# Absolute Priority 1

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **Absolute Priority 1** | Met/Not Met | Not Met |

**Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:**

This application did not coherently and comprehensively address how it will build on the core educational assurance areas (as defined in this notice) to create learning environments that are designed to significantly improve learning and teaching through

the personalization of strategies, tools, and supports for students and educators that are aligned with college- and career-ready standards (as defined in this notice) or college- and career-ready graduation requirements (as defined in this notice); accelerate student achievement and deepen student learning by meeting the academic needs of each student; increase the effectiveness of educators; expand student access to the most effective educators; decrease achievement gaps across student groups; and increase the rates at which students graduate from high school prepared for college and careers.

There was no indication that the applicants were attempting to build on a base of the four educational assurance areas. No mention of educator evaluations was included. Common Core standards were included in the context of teacher professional development. It is not at all clear whether or not these districts have powerful data systems capable of providing data to guide instruction. There was no mention of turning around low-achieving schools. Required elements of the grant, most noticeably the budget, are entirely missing from the proposal.

While there are some good ideas to improve the school districts, the proposal articulated here does not meet the requirements of this grant.

| Total | 210 | 66 |
|---|---|---|

# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

### Application #1027SC-2 for Dorchester District Two

## A. Vision (40 total points)

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)** | 10 | 4 |

**(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

The Consortium LEAs, representing Dorchester and Berkeley Districts describe their comprehensive and reform vision as: "The Consortium will ensure that every teacher is content qualified, delivers quality instruction daily, and has a positive impact on student achievement so that every student is literate, graduate high school on time, is college and career ready, and can achieve their full potential in life."

The Consortium articulated the process for accelerating student achievement, deepening student learning, and increasing equity through personalized student support as: Closing the achievement gap between its majority students and the most high need subgroups;personalizing instruction for all students using appropriate interventions, quality instructors, and key resources especially for its most vulnerable student populations;helping students understand and select their personal options for college and career so that they are prepared to matriculate in college and pursue a career;enhancing teacher content knowledge and pedagogy skills in math and science curricula and literacy for K-12; use of the CCLS and project based assessments for math and science curricula;involving key stakeholders----parents, business, community and higher education, so students are college and career ready; and increasing the quality of the physical instructional environment so students have access to technology, key information, rigorous curricula, and other educational resources, and learning is guaranteed.

The vision statement focused on the classroom teacher and did not include how personalized learning environments for all students would be accomplished. The Consortium provided a framework for creating personalized learning environments but not a thorough step by step process to: demonstrate how the achievement gap would be closed between subgroups; reform strategies for each participating school or trend data.

| (A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points) | 10 | 4 |
|---|---|---|

**(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The Consortium Districts presented its Annual Report Card, SCDE data, local school data from TertaData Systems, and research data as evidence throughout the RTT application. The current 5 year graduation rates were reported as 73.7% for Dorchester Two and70.1% for Berkeley; the corresponding dropout rate is 2.9% and 2.0% for Dorchester Two and Berkeley respectively. The Consortium LEAs selected 27 secondary schools demonstrating high rates of poverty and dropout. The RTT initiative (Berkeley-Dorchester School Improvement & Learning Initiative) will target over 27,000 secondary students----52% from low-income families. The High schools in Dorchester Two do not reflect the 40% or greater free and reduced lunch eligibility rate. The RTT reform will also serve 525 math and science teachers in middle and high school (e.g.. 269 and 256 at DorchesterTwo and Berkeley respectively) and 150 middle and high school guidance counselors within the Consortium LEAs---675 professional educators directly.

| (A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points) | 10 | 4 |
|---|---|---|

**(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

The Consortium will target secondary students. However, the Consortium recognize that dropout prevention and preparation for college and career should start in pre-school with building literacy skills, increasing self-esteem through positive relationships or role-modeling, and providing access to key educational opportunities. To scale up the project, the Consortium propose to engage families as early as preschool to ensure greater literacy and social skills among students before they enter first grade. They realize that this goal will require K-16 collaborations with early childhood programs----private and public, community-based or school-based, secular or faith-based. Each Consortium district learned that multi-county partnerships can be effective when they build on interventions that work, leverage funds to support education in an austerity climate, and increase the chances and opportunities to help young people move toward college and careers. The Consortium articulated the preceding recommendation for involving partnerships in the scale up process but did not explain what steps they would initiate to engage families and partners. They did not identify specific partners for each category mentioned that could become a part of the RTT reform process.

The Consortium intend to focus on what they believe to be the common denominator between all students who struggle to graduate on time or progress in college-----------poor academic skills and not knowing. They further add that the RTT project will consider poor math performance in 8th and 9th grade as one of the early warning signs for students who are at-risk for dropout and/or may fail to graduate on time. Consortium districts indicate that they will enhance upon its current HSTW model. The Consortium emphasize the following key changes that must be made to accelerate student achievement as: Too many teachers, as evident in survey data, lacked an in-depth level of understanding math and science content. More specifically, teaching methods for math and science lacked innovative hands-on relevant or technology driven strategies; teachers were not analyzing or addressing the individual needs of students and not using differentiated instruction. To address teachers instructional practices that affect student learning the Consortium will provide Math and ELA PLC training seminars and staff development in CCLS curriculum.

The Consortium clearly identified teacher instructional practices as an area to be addressed in the RTT application. However, they did not provide evidence to address how they would utilize participating teachers who are designated effective or highly effective to scale up RTT professional development to other district-wide schools.

| (A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points) | 10 | 4 |
|---|---|---|

**(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

The Consortium LEAs believe that to improve student outcomes, they must help students make stronger connections between high school and college using strategies that appeal to their more interactive, visual and technology influenced fast-paced generation, to this end, they intend to transform the way educators teach math and science, increase competence levels of educators,and create alternative pathways to graduation and/or college. Thus, the overarching goal and vision for the project is to raise high school graduation and college-going rates among Consortium LEAs most vulnerable students by improving the instructional practices of teachers. The Consortium does not provide an in-depth analysis of performance and trend data. A thorough process explaining how they intend to decrease achievement gaps between subgroups at each participating school was not clearly articulated.

Objectives to achieve the preceding goal were described. The Consortium anticipate over the course of the RTT grant outcomes will include: (1) 95% of participating students will meet proficiency standards on SC PASS, HSAP, and EOC assessment by FY 2016 (2) 90% and 85% of participating students participating students will graduate on time FY2016; (4) 100 % of participating students graduating and enrolling in college will have financial aid to meet their academic needs; (5) gaps between key subgroups will be reduced by 25 % in every category in four years; (6) obtain a 95% proficiency rate in content knowledge and pedagogy skills among 525 math and science participating teachers by FY2014; and (7) obtain a 95%

proficiency rate in pre-collegiate content knowledge among 150 guidance professionals and 100% IGP completion rate for students and parents.

Overall, the Consortium provided statements to articulate goals and outcomes;however the process for achieving them was vague.

# B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)** | 15 | 8 |

**(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

Each Consortium District has implemented programs to improve student outcomes by creating partnerships with entities such as, Trident Community College, College of Charleston, STEM Center, Education Foundation and other non-profit community based organizations. A table illustrating the ongoing partnerships and reform efforts implemented to allow each participating high school to coordinate programs using a schools improvement council, Business Advisory Boards & Articulation Agreements were included in this section. With the implementation of Target Teach and two key interventions ( Pyramid of Interventions& Co-teaching), each district was able to achieve significant gains in test scores in elementary and middle schools and improvement in graduation rates. Also, to use Project Teach teachers to learn how to analyze and gather key student performance data.

Additional achievements were cited for each Consortium District and not by participating schools. For example, Dorchester shared the following successes: graduation rate improved by nearly 5% over last year, dropout rate decreased by 33%; Superintendent Pye was SC Superintendent of the Year; in 2010-11, Dorchester Two ranked in the top ten among 85 SC school district for number of elementary students meeting state standards in math and English---also ranking in the top 15 for middle school students. Berkley district reported the following successes: graduation rate improved 7% over last year; increased the number of Black students passing SC HSP was nearly 10%; the Middle College has a 100% graduation rate since its inception in 2010; and increased the number of Black students passing Science EOC by 18%. Working as a coalition the Consortium districts intend to share best practices as they relate to their most vulnerable populations and leverage resources. Each participating district's successes related to student outcomes were illustrated in charts.

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)** | 5 | 2 |

**(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The Consortium LEAs report that personnel salaries for administrators and teachers are available on each districts' website. Each Superintendents' salary is reported annually at a board meeting and often published in local newspapers. In addition, transparency reports for expenditures are available on line under financial services; and audits are posted on district websites. However, the Consortium does not provide information on how parents are able to access the actual personnel salaries at each participating school.

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)** | 10 | 5 |

**(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

For Criterion B, the Consortium referenced their MOA with the College of Charleston. This MOA allows the College of Charleston faculty to evaluate teachers, gather data and provide instruction designed specifically for each of the participating district's math and science needs. Summer sessions are attended by middle and high school teachers. Middle College, another initiative and goal described in this application will be implemented in Dorchester. Berkley will oversee the Middle College implementation process in the Dorchester district. The Consortium noted that the Middle College has the support of the Board of Trustees, the Superintendent, and President of Charleston University.

The Consortium mentioned specific initiatives that seem to have sufficient autonomy but did not provide the logistics that may or may not affect implementation of personalized learning environments. A clear descriptive statement of the extend to which each Consortium District will provide participating schools with the autonomy and flexibility needed to implement personalized learning environments and specific RTT initiatives was not articulated.

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)** | 10 | 2 |

**(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

Applicant reported that there is no collective bargaining unit in Consortium districts of South Carolina.The Consortium did not provide evidence to substantiate that at least 70 percent of teachers from participating schools support the proposal . They mentioned in the application that district teachers, principals, counselors, and administrators provided input into the reform plan, contributed to elements of the application, and committed to be continually involved in discussions, implementation, and evaluation process------95% expressed support for the RTT grant.  Ninety-five percentage was a total representing all supporters. The actual number of teachers involved in the process was not reported. A description of how parents and students (when applicable) were engaged in the development of the application was missing.

There were limited letters of support. For example, after repeated follow- up from the Consortium districts a couple of respondents replied via email. Most notable, was a letter from South Carolina State Superintendent Mick Zais, who did not support the submission of the Consortium Districts RTT application. Superintendent Zais concerns are described in his letter located in Appendix D.

Lastly, Consortium LEAs did not provide sufficient documentation demonstrating the extend to which meaningful stakeholders were engaged in the development, feedback and revision process; and how the application was revised based on their engagement and input.

| (B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points) | 5 | 2 |
|---|---|---|

**(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:**

 Although, the Consortium Districts identified some success in closing the achievement gaps between nonwhite and white students and low-income and middle-income students, the gap between graduation and dropout rates has proven to be more difficult. Although, the evidence presented in the following paragraphs describe an analysis of the applicant's current status in implementing personalized learning environments and the logic behind their RTT reform proposal; it does not demonstrate significant gains in any of the participating schools.

 For example, the Consortium LEAs state that each district's graduation and dropout data reflect the trend in South Carolina-------that is nonwhite students have lower high school graduation rates and higher drop out rates compared to their White peers (p.24). This data is cited in the School Report Card for each Consortium district.   A few additional gaps cited were the test results from the The Nation's Report card issued by the National Assessment of Educational Progress for 2009 indicating that 45% of South Carolina 8th graders scored below basic proficiency in the science portion of the test and 31% scored below basic proficiency in mathematics.

The Consortium reported that they will use failing scores on the EOC in math,  ELA, or Science as a key indicator for those students who will most likely need remediation in college. They intend to also consider poor math performance in 8th and 9th grade as one of the early warning signs for students who are at-risk for dropping out or not finishing high school on time. A chart illustrating student achievement for  State Assessment FY 2011 was included in this section (p.25).

The data analysis from grades 6-12 show a vertical assessment of science and mathematics content that revealed the need for a coordinated partnership between middle school and high school content teachers. In addition, the Consortium believe that focusing on preparing math and science teachers in content areas, improving formative and summative student assessments, especially in math/science, and improving guidance services in pre-collegiate services/college readiness will impact all students in the participating schools.  A timeline of key activities associated with the implementation of personalized learning environment and  teacher professional development was presented.

# C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

|  | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(C)(1) Learning (20 points)** | **20** | **5** |

**(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

The Consortium's approach to learning that engages and empowers all learners, in particular high-need students, in an age-appropriate manner that enables them to pursue a rigorous course of study aligned to college and career ready standards and college and career ready graduation requirements to ensure graduating on time, will be facilitated by the following processes:

- The RTT reform effort will operate year round and be available to all participating students to complete their academic coursework.
- Strategies from the HSTW model will be implemented along with the development of best practices for math and science instruction, use of technology, differentiated instruction, career academies, smaller learning communities,and guidance working with at-risk students to ensure success.
- Career and college review 1/2 credit elective course to provide instruction and hands on experiences in pre-collegiate.;
- Middle College
- Current and active initiatives that will continue to support teaching and learning by personalizing the learning environment are: Individualized Graduation Plan (IGP) for all participating students; comprehensive college and career counseling; APEX Learning System;monthly Saturday Institute; AM/PM tutoring;expanded guidance for social services and academic support;
- An Early Warning System--to monitor weekly attendance, grades, homework completion, discipline issues,medical childcare, and others
- One week residential experience at Charleston Southern University for students to obtain an overview of college life
- Parent involvement will include ongoing communication and workshops on school processes, policies, Parent Portal, HS graduation requirements, IGPs, college/career requirements, Parent Link, etc.
- Dual Credit/AP/Honors
- Kahn Academy
- Access to computers and internet for all participating students.

Overall, the Consortium identified numerous RTT initiatives but they did not clearly articulate how each would be connected to the development of personalized learning environments for participating high needs and ELL students.  The mechanisms in place or proposed initiatives did not include  exposure to diverse cultures and diverse learning that promote deep understanding, and how strategies would be applicable for all students was not mentioned.

|  | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)** | **20** | **7** |

**(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The Consortium's approach to teaching and learning that will help all participating teachers to improve instruction and increase their capacity to support student progress toward meeting college- and career-ready standards or college- and career-ready graduation are

- Professional development for all participating guidance counselors;
- Professional development for all participating math and science teacher;s
- Continued collaboration within each PLC;
- Co-teaching model for special education and regular education teacher;
- Technology training for all participating staff;
- Access to Online Platforms, Wi-Fi and technology; and
- Technology Specialist to support implementation of instructional technology in each participating district.

 Math and science teachers will participate in a 4-week summer session designed as a blended format---lab, classroom strategies, online;courses will be tailored to address the specific needs of students enrolled in participating schools. An analysis of skill deficiencies by results from SC PASS, EOC, and HSAP will become key topics for instruction. Participating

educators will engage in hands on project-based strategies instead of a series of lectures, math and science teachers will use science probes, various technologies, tool kits, and software to learn content and pedagogy. Teachers will be able to use Evirs, a video recording software to tape segments of their teaching and upload the video to a secure site for analysis by their peers or supervisors to help improve pedagogy skills.

Information, from such sources as the district's teacher evaluation system that helps school leaders and school leadership teams assess, and take steps to improve, individual and collective educator effectiveness and school culture and climate, for the purpose of continuous school improvement is not presented in this application. The Consortium LEAs do not specify how teacher evaluations would be used to determine student growth.

The Consortium Districts did not provide sufficient evidence to support how they would improve teachers' and principals' practice and effectiveness by using feedback provided by the LEAs teacher and principal evaluation systems including frequent feedback on individual and collective effectiveness; as well as by providing recommendations, supports, and interventions as needed for improvement.

## D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

|  | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)** | 15 | 5 |

**(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

The Consortium described a few programs with policy components that have allowed the district to personalize and improve learning as: MKinney-Vento Homeless Youth, TetraData Warehouse, Articulation Agreement with Trident College (pgs. 38-39). Consortium practices, policies and rules to support the implementation process and provide students, educators with the resources and supports they need ---when and where they need it include-------- Students will have the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of standards in multiple comparable ways to graduate through APEX, evening school, Adult Education, Middle College, and Alternative Program. MOA that the Consortium mentions in this section is between the Charleston College and the participating districts to provide resources to teachers and students.

To address the current governance structure and organization of central office for this application, the Consortium LEAs proposed key management positions to enhance and support the strategic planning process and infrastructure. These positions include a project manager, district liaison, technology liaison facilitator, curriculum specialist, middle college director and college/career director. Evidence describing the extend to which each participating school has autonomy over school schedules, calendars, personnel decisions, staffing models, etc. was not articulated.

| **(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)** | 10 | 8 |
|---|---|---|

**(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

To support the school infrastructure and personalized learning the Consortium LEAs provided the following list of resources:

- Professional development for guidance staff
- Career and College review elective courses for all 9th/10th graders
- Middle College
- Professional development for all teaching staff -vertical and horizontal
- Development of a curricula repository
- Target Teach methods
- Partnerships (e.g.. Stem institute at the Citadel, Charleston Southern University, Trident Technical College
- Dorchester and Berkley districts School Improvement Referendum (e.g.. purpose, number of proposed new schools, repairs/renovations, capital improvements included technology upgrades).

Although, the resources listed above provide some support the comprehensive policies essential to the implementation of the RTT Consortium proposal were not described in detail. For example, the Consortium did not thoroughly explain the following: how participating administrators and teachers will access data; the extent to which each participating school has autonomy over school schedules, calendars, personnel decisions, staffing models, budgets; how websites at each school will

be easily accessible and maintained for families; and the extent to which the limited number of existing programs with policy components will accelerate and sustain Personalized Learning Environments.

# E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)** | 15 | 5 |

**(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

The Consortium LEAs stated that the RTT reform plan will build upon and enhance each district's annual strategic planning process and infrastructure with coordination teams and project manager for each district. They identified key management positions,such as:

- Project Director: Manage daily operations, budget, payroll, chair of leadership team activities.
- District Liaison: Coordinate all RTT project activities at the district level; liaison between the district and schools
- Technology Liaison Facilitator: Provide technical support for all project staff and technology instructional support to the Middle College
- Guidance Counselors: Day to day services to students
- Curriculum Specialist: Lead all activities related to development of CC courses and project based assessments
- Middle College Director: Manage daily operations of the Middle College, serve on the Leadership Team, manage budget; liaison between student and higher education
- College/Career Coordinator: Manage the pre-collegiate process for participating students
- Leadership Team: Provide oversight for continuous improvement

A chart delineating the continuous improvement strategies for monitoring, measuring and publicly sharing information on the quality of RTT investment included: leadership team planning meetings; advisory meetings with stakeholders, monthly budget monitoring and staff meetings;monthly student progress reports; student and staff feedback; quarterly stakeholder surveys; quarterly progress reports to Board of Trustees and two math/science cohort debriefing meetings per semester at College of Charleston. The preceding strategies did not have supporting documentation that would ensure continuous improvement in the event any of the positions could not be continued after funding ceased; and how each would be monitored.

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)** | 5 | 2 |

**(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The Consortium indicated that the strategies listed below will be implemented to ensure that there is on-going communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders; however, evidence referencing how each of these activities will be monitored and evaluated was not documented.

- Six monthly Advisory meetings
- Posting key information on District and participating schools websites
- Electronic newsletters to parents about program activities
- Coordinated semi-annual community fairs, parent nights, PTSA meetings
- One on One conversations with all stakeholders
- School assemblies
- Meet State legislators on State Legislator Day in Columbia, SC
- Information sharing using parent robo calls
- Attend key meetings (e.g.. Chamber, School Board, STEM center, Mayor and County Council, etc.)

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)** | 5 | 2 |

## (E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The Consortium Districts believe that to improve student outcomes, they must help students make stronger connections between high school and college using strategies that appeal to their more interactive,visual and technology influenced fast-paced generation. The RTT initiatives will be open to all students in participating schools. Special attention will be given to the most vulnerable students (e.g. first generation college students, homeless, academically high-need, etc.)  Thus, the overarching goals for the project are listed as:

- Raise high school graduation and college-going rates; Objectives are- to increase graduation rate as measured  by an annual increase in the number and percentage of students who progress to the next grade...... 2) increase the science and math content knowledge of grades 6-12 teachers, focusing on improving low proficiency content areas................3) increase the pedagogical content knowledge skills of grades 6-12 math and science teachers as measured by increased student test scores (EOC,SC, PASS & HSAP).
- The students outcomes will show increasing progress annually as indicated in the forms located in Appendix A.

The Consortium provided a framework for achieving the performance measures but did not articulate an in-depth process on how to accomplish and gauge each measure over time.

| (E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points) | 5 | 3 |
|---|---|---|

## (E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Although, the Consortium proposed implementing the following plans to evaluate the effectiveness of RTT-D funded activities;they did not not explain how these strategies would be monitored and assessed:

1. The Technology Facilitator will assess all software and technology tools prior to purchasing

to ensure that the districts have adequate infrastructure to implement programs and to avoid

duplication

2. Staff Training to ensure that project staff can use the technology tools necessary to provide

the services and programs outlined in the grant and to conduct with evaluation.

3. Student outcomes in math and science (SC PASS, EOC, HSAP,) will help measure teacher

effectiveness among cohort participants compared to other students statewide.

4. Teacher and/or professional annual evaluations (district level) will be used to determine the

effectiveness of project staff/faculty. Consortium Districts have agreed to use any adopted

program that measures teacher effectiveness and/or required by the Race To The Top grant

5. Project level pre and post assessments in professional development workshops will

determine effectiveness of individual workshops

6. Data from school reports cards for the district and participant school will help determine

effectiveness of project activities

7. A Formal Evaluation will be completed to measure project outcomes and goal obtainment

8.  In-kind contributions will determine the effectiveness of the Consortium Districts' ability to

gain local and community support

9. Sustainability report which will reflect actual monetary contributions to the project and key

relationships/partnerships of business, faith-based, community, parent, etc.

10. Annual Report which highlights final outcomes for students and faculty

11. Dissemination of project activities and outcomes with local, state, and national educational

groups and organizations about best practices, successes, and lesson learned.

12. Formal Evaluation of the project to be disseminated throughout the professional community.

(p.43)

# F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)** | **10** | **0** |

**(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

Evidence to support this criterion was not documented and missing from the application.

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)** | **10** | **0** |

**(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The Consortium LEAs state that the project will be sustained by each district's local funds( Title one, McKinney-Vento, Snack Machine Profits & SC Academic Assistance $$$), local grant sources, and in-kind from community partners like Communities In Schools of Dorchester County.  However, there is no documentation of actual or estimated proceeds from each source. The Consortium also intends to rely on public donations and district funding sources that may have restricted requirements to support the sustainability process.  It may be unrealistic to depend on existing grants and public and private donors  for sustainability of this proposal.

Overall, the Consortium's description for the sustainability process for the RTT project does not include a detailed itemized budget to support the application. Additionally, the NC State Superintendent Mike Zais voiced in his letter, his lack of support for the RTT plan, mentioning specifically:"..................The application should  strike a better balance of personnel and services provided to schools. Furthermore, sustainability is of great concern. The application draft fails to identify any funding sources for recurring expenses initially paid by grant funds. This will leave either your taxpayer or students at great risk and should be addressed before submitting the application (Appendix D)."

# Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)** | **10** | **5** |

**Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:**

Based on the extent to which the Consortium LEAs propose to fully integrate public or private resources in a partnership designed to augment  each participating schools' resources and  provide additional student and family supports to schools that address the social, emotional, or behavioral needs of the participating students was not thoroughly articulated in the narrative of the RTT application. However, outlined in Section E are general strategic planning processes and infrastructure, and timeline that vaguely describe a needs assessment, decision-making process, on-going communication and engagement, performance measures and evaluation process.

The project will be scaled up by engaging families. For example, the Consortium indicated that involving families of preschoolers will require a K-16 system collaboration with early childhood programs-private and public; community based or school based;secular or faith based .However, key partners such as United Way, Family Literacy, Berkley Early Childhood Center (p.4) were mentioned but the extend to which each partner is or will be involved was not discussed.

Supported by another grant until 2013, the Consortium Districts intend to provide social services and academic support to participating high needs students. Activities will include: one home visit per semester or following two consecutive absences; an assigned student mentor; one additional counseling session with guidance per quarter; coordinated social services after hours; a multi-disciplinary effort to meet student/family needs for students with chronic social problems or circumstances, homelessness, substance abuse; ELL services for second language participating students, etc. The Consortium did not provide an explanation to address how these services would continue and be funded after 2013.

# Absolute Priority 1

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|

| Absolute Priority 1 | Met/Not Met | Not Met |
|---|---|---|

**Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:**

The Consortium LEAs addressed how they would build on the core educational assurance areas to create learning environments that will improve teaching and learning through the following reform and change initiatives:

- Enhance and expand the HSTW model in Consortium districts
- Math and ELA PLC Training seminars in CCC
- Advanced Math&Science professional development and college credit towards a Master's Degree for faculty
- Guidance staff professional development
- Career and College review elective courses
- Middle College

    The Consortium Districts provided a general framework for how they would increase the effectiveness of educators and expand student access to the most effective teachers by addressing: continuous student academic failure, high school dropout, and academic remediation in college: lack of preparation and understanding of college or career requirements and the precollegiate process; failure in math gateway courses in secondary school as well as entry into college; and dysfunction or lack of information within family units.

    **SI & LI** reform efforts will emphasis key changes that must be made to improve student performance and overall educational success: the way educators teach math     and science; we found thru surveys, teacher observations, and work products that too many teachers lacked a deeper level of understanding of math or science content. Moreover, the methods that they were using to teach math and science often lacked innovative, hands-on, relevant or technology driven strategies; teachers were not analyzing or addressing their individual student's primary weaknesses and many were not using differentiated instruction effectively. The partnership with College of Charleston will allow teachers to learn new hands-on methods, build a deeper understanding of the content and use their PLCs to serve as a self-monitoring tool/assessments as well as a way to get peer to peer assessments thru video-taping sessions (pgs. 5-6).

Overall, the Consortium focused on the needs of educators in the area of science and math instruction. A thorough process for implementing personalized learning environments entail numerous strategies and activities that operated as a separate entity and not as a comprehensive model to address the inclusion of higher education.

| Total | 210 | 77 |
|---|---|---|

# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

### Application #1027SC-3 for Dorchester District Two

## A. Vision (40 total points)

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)** | 10 | 4 |

**(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant has presented a reform vision that does not provide sufficient clarity as to how the various components of the proposal work together to form a coherent plan. The applicant identified several areas of need for students attending schools in the two consortium districts, including the need to: (1) increase number of students on-track to graduate; (2) ensure students are able to demonstrate proficiency in Algebra and math in grades 8 and 9; (3) improve understanding of college and career requirements and (4) address "dysfunction" or lack of information families have about academic achievement and college. To address these needs, the applicant proposes a mix of interventions. However, some of the interventions leave

these needs unaddressed or focus on other issues.  Specifically, the applicant's plan to provide training on common core curriculum in ELA and math, rather than math alone, does not indicate that the applicant's vision is a coherent one.  Similarly, a significant component of the applicant's plan is to enable more teachers and guidance counselors to obtain advanced degrees and training.  However, the applicant does not explain how giving scholarships to educators, without any commitment that those educators will continue to work in the applicant's schools, will help improve the academic achievement of current students by 2016.  Further, the discussion of the proposal to create the Dorchester Two Middle College is confusing.  It is unclear how the school will be developed, which students will attend and how they will benefit as a result of attending the school.  There is no comprehensive discussion of using personalized student instruction or support as a lever for improved outcomes.

| (A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points) | 10 | 4 |
|---|---|---|

**(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

Although the applicant lists the sources of school data and information it used to prepare its proposal and identified the 27 target schools as ones with "high rates of poverty and dropout," the applicant does not present a detailed discussion of how the target schools were selected.  There is no indication that the schools in the applicant's districts are those with the highest rates of poverty or highest dropout rates.  Some of the schools do appear to have significant populations of students who are socio-economically disadvantaged (based on percentage of students receiving free and reduced price lunch).  The applicant provides a list of the 17 middle schools and 10 high schools that would be participating schools.  However, the applicant fails to provide any detailed information regarding the 27,000 students would participate in the applicant's initiatives.

| (A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points) | 10 | 4 |
|---|---|---|

**(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant provides a general description of its desire to scale up its initiatives to reach pre-school and elementary school children and a commitment to working with other districts in "low-country."  However, the applicant does not demonstrate a concrete intention to develop programs that would serve students in other districts or schools outside the participating districts.  The applicant indicates that it would like to expand the "HSTW model" at all high schools, but does not provide any specific activities, timelines for action, or deliverables to suggest it has a plan to achieve that goal.  Similarly, the applicant proposes to change the role of guidance counselors in the participating districts, but does not set forth a concrete plan to do so.  The applicant's general discussion of providing counselors with access to more professional development and training does not supply enough information about how the applicant would use grant funds to transform the role guidance counselors play.  The applicant does not include any discussion of how district policies would be modified to support change or whether structural changes to they way guidance counselors are deployed would be part of the plan.  The applicant's theory of change relates to the belief that students need access to better trained teachers and guidance counselors and need information about college life and the application process.  The application, however, lacks a robust discussion of how the initiatives the applicant would implement will bring about the necessary changes for participating students.

| (A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points) | 10 | 7 |
|---|---|---|

**(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant does include a set of performance goals, but does not provide enough evidence to support a conclusion that the goals are achievable.  The applicant indicates that as a result of its plan, all students in target schools will obtain a 95% proficiency rate in ELA, math and science on statewide assessments. The applicant also sets a 95% graduation rate and 73% "college-going rate." but appears to provide base year comparison data for the entire population of students in the district, not just targeted students. The applicant makes a general commitment to reducing the achievement gap "by 25% in every category" and includes data that demonstrates the existence of an achievement gap between white and non-white students, in both districts. However, the application expects to eliminate the achievement gap entirely by 2016.

# B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)** | 15 | 10 |

**(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant appears to have a relatively strong record of academic performance in the two participating districts.  The students in both districts perform on statewide assessments at strong levels and the drop out rates are under 5%.  The

applicant has only provided limited data regarding academic achievement, offering information on performance from 2010 and 2011. Accordingly, it is unclear whether the trend of positive performance extends beyond those two years. There is no evidence that the applicant has made significant progress narrowing the achievement gap or that it has engaged in reforms aimed specifically at reducing the achievement gap. The applicant indicates that it has taken steps to implement reforms that focus on improving the ability of teachers to provide quality instruction. As a result of those recently adopted initiatives, the teachers have gained experience using data on individual students to tailor instruction and intervention. The applicant's high schools have begun working with school improvement councils, business advisory boards and other external partners to improve learning opportunities for students. Moreover, educators have built a curriculum repository that allows teachers to share content, lesson plans and other instructional materials. The applicant does not discuss the extent to which the recent reforms are aimed at the districts' lowest-achieving schools or all schools. Additionally, the applicant does not mention whether student performance data is available to students and families in way to further engage them in their child's education.

| (B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points) | 5 | 3 |
|---|---|---|

**(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant's districts appear to have a high degree of transparency with regard to the district's finances. The applicant indicates that transparency reports for all expenditures are available online and personnel salaries are also available online via the applicant's website. The applicant does not specify whether that information is maintained at the district or school level.

| (B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points) | 10 | 1 |
|---|---|---|

**(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant does not offer any discussion of the applicable state laws and regulations that might pose barriers to implementation of the proposal. The applicant does not provide any evidence that state laws will allow implementation of the plan to increase alternative paths to graduation or fully expand the Middle College model. Instead, the applicant points to a number of partnerships with colleges and universities in the state. These partnerships demonstrate that the applicant has established strong ties with the state's post-secondary institutions in ways that appear to benefit participating students and create additional learning opportunities for them.

| (B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points) | 10 | 4 |
|---|---|---|

**(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant appears to have based its proposal in part, on input from local stakeholders and members of its community. The applicant's plans and goals have been informed by an ongoing dialogue in the community about student academic performance, competitiveness and preparing students for college and career. It does not appear, however, that the applicant brought stakeholders together for the specific purpose of providing feedback or ideas for the proposal. Instead, the applicant drew information from various reports and sources such as the Chamber of Commerce needs assessment, that were established prior to the applicant's plan to submit its RTT proposal. Participating districts received input from district teachers, principals, counselors and administrators. The applicant indicates that 95% of district staff "expressed support for the Race to the Top Grant." There is no information provided as to how many teachers specifically support the proposal. The state's superintendent was critical of the proposal and other local officials have not indicated their strong support.

| (B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points) | 5 | 4 |
|---|---|---|

**(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant has engaged in a rigorous needs assessment process. The applicant reviewed research regarding students who do not graduate on time or drop out of high school and determined that there is a strong relationship between the number of students who drop out of school and who perform poorly in math or science during eighth and ninth grade. Based upon that finding, the applicant conducted a review of scores for all students in grades 6-12 on two statewide assessments and end of course exams. The applicant's learned that some students are not achieving an acceptable level of proficiency in math and science. A team of district staff and consultants from the College of Charleston examined the data and concluded that the districts need to establish a coordinated partnership among middle and high school content teachers. The team also identified a need to improve communication and collaboration among stakeholders at all grade levels. The applicant believes that targeted interventions aimed at improving math and science instruction, coupled with improved guidance services will improve student performance and ultimately improve graduation rates for high need students. The applicant does not, however, include an explicit discussion of utilizing personalized learning environments as a means to improve instruction, guidance services or academic performance.

# C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(C)(1) Learning (20 points)** | **20** | **12** |

**(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant seeks to utilize a wide array of new services and initiatives that it hopes will improve student learning for all students, particularly those who have demonstrated a lack of proficiency in math and science. The applicant intends to take a Christmas-tree approach to personalized learning by adding a large number of programs at schools aimed at providing students with more opportunities to learn. While the plans relating to improved guidance counseling and services and the individualized graduation plan work toward a similar goal, the overall plan to improve learning lacks a necessary focus on strategies that have proven to accelerate academic performance in math and science or to make students more prepared for college and career. There does not appear to be a consistent framework for the selection of programs and interventions that the applicant knows will improve student learning. The applicant expects to implement simultaneously programs credit recovery, before and after school tutoring, Saturday institutes, a university sponsored residential experience, an early warning system, dual credit and AP courses and use of Kahn Academy. The applicant seeks to address the needs of ELL students with Rosetta Stone programs and a mix of popular programs aimed at improving parental engagement.

The application does not include a sustained discussion of how college and career ready standards will be integrated into the curriculum and has a very brief discussion on expanding access to technology or high quality digital content as a way to improve learning opportunities for students. The applicant mentions use of APEX Learning, Rosetta Stone and Kahn Academy, but does not present a comprehensive plan to utilize digital content. The applicant also fails to address how the needs of high needs students will be accommodated.

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)** | **20** | **8** |

**(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant intends to provide guidance counselors and math and science teachers with extensive professional development designed to improve student's access to high quality instruction. However, the applicant's approach to improved teaching and leading is unfocused. It does not appear that the applicant has engaged in a process designed to identify select core programming that will enhance the ability teachers and guidance counselors have personalize learning for students. Instead, the professional development offered will be designed to improve the quality of teaching generally. In addition, the applicant does not present any plans to enhance current programs designed to improve technology training, infrastructure or to educate teachers on how to utilize technology or digital content to differentiate instruction. The application also lacks any discussion of how the applicant intends to increase the number of students who receive instruction from effective or highly effective teachers and principals.

# D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)** | **15** | **7** |

**(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

The application contains a brief description of the organizational structure of the district level administration and it appears that the districts will have the administrative support necessary to implement its plan. Additionally, the participating districts appear to have sufficient autonomy to make decisions regarding local policies that might impact implementation. The applicant expressly states that current laws enable it to offer alternative learning environments such as blended learning courses and dual credit options. One significant area of concern, however, is that the applicant appears to rely heavily on its ability to draw from local sources of revenue from other programs in order to support and sustain RTT initiatives. The lack of support from the state education agency and other local officials may pose problems for applicant if it becomes necessary to obtain approval for use of those funds or to secure legislative or regulatory changes. In addition, the applicant fails to include a discussion of resources for special needs and ELL students.

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)** | **10** | **5** |

**(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant did not provide any evidence that it has a plan establish a comprehensive infrastructure designed to support personalized learning. The application includes limited discussion of the existing supports: (1) all teachers and administrators have access to student data, (2) the applicant maintains a website with information aimed at keeping families and students informed about student activities and progress, (3) parent portals to give parents more information on student progress and (4) technical assistance and technology specialists.

# E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)** | **15** | **8** |

**(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant presents a reasonable plan for implementing a continuous improvement process. The leadership team is committed to overseeing implementation and monitoring progress. The process involves monthly meetings, bi-annual advisory meetings with stakeholders to provide updates on progress and get feedback and other steps designed to engage the community. The plan is not sufficiently specific in its goals and the overall process does not seem to be rigorous in that there are no clear commitments to evaluate the program in a comprehensive way.

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)** | **5** | **3** |

**(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The plan to continue engagement and communication with stakeholders is modest, but reasonable. It is likely sufficient to ensure that the community is informed about the progress of the applicant's implementation of the proposal. The applicant will continue to leverage existing relationships with organizations in the community to reach stakeholders and will complement those opportunities to communicate with a series of planned meetings, workshops and parent events.

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)** | **5** | **0** |

**(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant does not provide specific performance measures separate from those submitted in response to the question about the district's goals for improved student outcomes. Instead, the applicant defines the various assessment tools that the applicant intends to use for those goals.

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)** | **5** | **3** |

**(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant presents a multi-faceted plan for the evaluation of the program activities. The applicant will rely on review of progress in meeting performance goals and data from school report cards to evaluate impact on student learning. It will collect teacher evaluations and assessments on professional development to determine whether the program activities aimed at improving teaching and leading are successful. The applicant asserts that a "formal evaluation will be completed" but does not provide any detailed information regarding the scope of the evaluation, who will conduct the evaluation and what types of studies or observations will be included as part of the evaluation.

# F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)** | **10** | **0** |

**(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant does not provide a detailed budget as part of its application.

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)** | **10** | **4** |

**(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant does not have a high quality plan to sustain the project's goals following the grant period. The applicant intends to convene a meeting of the Leadership Team and Advisory Committee to prepare a four-year development plan. The plan will provide goals and activities designed to enable the team to raise private dollars to supplement the districts' local funds that will be used to sustain the districts' programs. The lack of support from local and state public officials raises serious questions about whether the applicant will be able to secure long term funding that will be necessary to sustain and scale up its initiatives. Moreover, the applicant has not provided a forward-looking budget, but has identified a number of potential donor targets.

## Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)** | **10** | **0** |
| | | |

## Absolute Priority 1

| | Available | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **Absolute Priority 1** | **Met/Not Met** | **Not Met** |

**Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant presents a theory of change that is grounded in a belief that students need access to better trained teachers and guidance counselors and need information about college life and the application process. The application, however, lacks a robust discussion of how the initiatives the applicant would implement will bring about the necessary changes for participating students. Further, it does not include a comprehensive approach to personalized learning or the use of technology or digital content to create personalized learning environments.

| **Total** | **210** | **91** |
|---|---|---|